

to the car roof as though exhausted. I noticed that the flimsy dress she wore was torn as if by brambles or fence wire. She wore no hat or wrap and her hair was disheveled.

"Does—does this train start soon?" she panted out.

"Why, yes," I answered, "but not with regular passengers."

"I know, I know," she breathed hurriedly, "but couldn't I stay here and ride just a little? I wouldn't make any trouble. I'd keep real quiet," she added, with eyes full of piteous entreaty that stirred my heart. Just then the signal whistle was repeated.

"I will be back in a minute and see what I can do for you," I said, marveling greatly, for at a glance I discerned that this was no girl tramp, or that genus, and I was at a loss to sense the cause of her distraction.

When I got to the ground down near the caboose the conductor was waving a paper. It proved to be orders to belt road the car I was in when he reached a certain junction. Just as I completed reading a red-faced, excited man rushed up. Pompous, frascible, I think he had the meekest countenance and the most treacherous eyes I have ever seen.

"You, men!" he shouted. "Have you seen anything of a girl?" and he rattled out a description of the very person whom I had left on top of my car.

"Look in the caboose—there's six way fares there," observed the conductor, and I hurried back to my car to find no trace of the mysterious young lady who had so recently appealed to my chivalry and sympathy.

She was gone. I scanned the level stretch beyond the tracks, expecting to glimpse her flying form, for I doubted not that she was a runaway. I pitied her if the man I had just seen was her guardian or relative.

She did not drift soon out of my mind. So vividly had she impressed

me that I could reproduce her mentally with clearness. We made our run and dusk came on just as we reached the junction. As we made up a new train and got well on to the belt spur I determined to open the trap in the roof and get inside and by the aid of my flashlight enjoyed the lunch I had tossed among the packages below.

We were just passing an overhead bridge when I caught a fleeting glimpse of a descending form. In a flash my suspicions were excited, and rightly. A man had dropped to the roof of the car from the girders. He bore down upon me.

Of course I realized what was doing. A gang were after the contents of the special car, and here was the forerunner of the group. He made for me and we collided. I went flat, and he, too. He was intent on throwing me off the car and later cast the precious freight to confreres awaiting him farther down the line.

I slid and, lying extended, seized the rod of the brake wheel. He would be upon me in another moment, when he uttered a sharp cry. Turning, I saw a figure beside the open trap. I saw the ankle of my enemy seized. He was swung backwards and then squarely over the side of the car into space.

The girl! In a flashing second I understood it all. She had got down into the car hours before, doubtless frightened into hiding from the man who was looking for her. She had thrown back the scuttle cover just in time to save the freight and myself.

And now, having shown the courage of a true woman, she became timid and reticent. I could not influence her to explain her situation. "Only to get away from persecution!" she uttered more than once, and shuddered. "Only to find some secluded home, a shelter, a safe retreat for a single month!"

I won upon her confidence during that strange night journey. When